2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

merable and not unlike many reported in other studies of rural Mexican communities. Omens are seen in the cry of the opossum, the entry of a bat into the house, the howling of a dog at midnight, the rainbow, the death of a snake within the house, the songs of certain birds, an egg laid without a shell, an egg with a double yolk, and many more such phenomena. When an evil omen appears in a home, the entire family feels threatened, not knowing upon whom misfortune will fall, and for a time everyone takes extra precautions against accident. Sometimes a favorite saint is appealed to or a powerful *curandero* is sought out, but more often the family does nothing, and the sense of apprehension soon wears off.

Evil supernatural forces can be made to act or can be counteracted by sorcerers and witches who receive their power from the devil. Witches are thought to be most active on Tuesdays and Fridays, and some people take extra precautions to hide soiled clothing or not to accept gifts of food on those days. Several old women, particularly those who know a great deal of herbal lore, are thought to be witches. Aggressive or bold women may also be suspected, particularly women who are able to dominate their husbands. Such women are often thought to have bewitched their husbands with *tolóache*, a local herb. It is interesting to note that some of the young girls who have studied outside the village, and who live by urban standards, are also suspected of being witches by a large portion of the population. One such girl married a boy in the barrio of Los Reyes and was accused of being a witch by her mother-in-law on the ground that she refused to behave like a good daughter-in-law and continued to see her former school friends.

Sorcery is used in courtship by unsuccessful suitors. The leg of a beetle is introduced into a drink to arouse the passions of an indifferent girl, or a powder made from skulls may be thrown on the palm of a woman's right hand or on her head, or into her food or drink. Foods which spoil too quickly are often believed to contain some powder meant for sorcery. A young Tepoztecan schoolteacher who received a gift of apples from a pupil was very much alarmed when she noted that the fruit rotted the very next day, and she suspected the child's family of trying to bewitch her. The most feared type of sorcery is that in which an image of the victim is fashioned out of his soiled clothing and pierced with a pin in the region of the heart or head to bring about his illness or death. To be doubly certain of success, the doll may be thrown into an anthill, so that *los aires* will also attack him.

Almost any unusual illness, but particularly swelling of the head or joints, may be attributed to sorcery by the local *curanderos*. A bewitched person usually leaves the village in the belief that he is no longer safe there and can be cured only away from the sorcerer. In such cases, Tepoztecans generally consult *curanderos* of wide repute in Yautepec or other towns and may spend several hundred pesos to undergo a cure. However, mild symptoms of sorcery or illness due to supernatural elements may be treated within the village by use of prayer, holy water, local herbs, ritual "cleansing," and by consulting certain local healers who go into a trance and converse with spirits to get a diagnosis and prescribe a cure.[11]

[11] This may be an element of African culture introduced into Tepoztlán by Negro slaves.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

12 *the quality of inter-personal relations:*

TEPOZTECANS are not an easy people to get to know; they are not an outgoing or expressive people. Most inter-personal relations are characterized by reserve, constriction, and carefully guarded behavior. Spontaneous or informal behavior is limited to the most intimate relationships and rarely occurs in public. Tepoztecans do not like to attract attention by word or deed, and self-control is learned early. In the presence of adults, children are expected to be unobtrusive.[1] In large public gatherings of adults and children, there is a minimum of noise. A family whose quarrels or boisterousness can be heard by passers-by soon earns a poor reputation.

In the street, most faces are somber and quiet; smiles, brief and appropriate; hearty laughter, rare. Women and girls are expected to walk with eyes downcast and those who smile freely may be suspected of being flippant and flirtatious. Adolescent girls, in particular, must have good facial control, for even a glance of interest may be taken as a sign of encouragement by some hopeful male. To smile unnecessarily at other people's infants is to be suspected of the evil eye, and most children do not learn to smile at strangers or visitors until they attend school.

Correct behavior is important at all times, at home, with friends, with relatives, and in public. Only in the case of old people and men who are drunk are deviations from customary reserve tolerated. Nevertheless, men recovering from drunkenness are apt to worry over having committed some improper act, such as behaving disrespectfully to a *compadre*. For this reason, men are careful about choosing drinking companions; individuals in a respect-relation, such as father and son, uncle and nephew, and *compadres*, must never drink together.

There are no fiestas in Tepoztlán which are openly bacchanalian in character, or in which women as well as men become drunk and promiscuous as in some other parts of Mexico. Even at the Carnaval, when Tepoztecans behave with relative freedom, the leading participants are disguised in masks and costumes, and whatever love-making takes place is done secretly.

[1] Only during the recreation hour in school do children make a great deal of noise and play wildly. The play pattern in school is in sharp contrast with that at home and is clearly out of keeping with the older culture pattern.

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

from his father. A man who fathers children with many women is placed under no social pressure to support his offspring or to marry the mother of any of them. Even in the case of a daughter's elopement, an act made worse by its rebellious flouting of parental authority, forgiveness is usually forthcoming after a lapse of time.

Sexuality is discouraged from childhood on; sex is a taboo subject within the home. Infant sexuality, masturbation, and sexual play among children, as well as curiosity concerning the bodily functions, is forbidden and punished. It is one of the more important obligations of the parent to keep their children "innocent," or, as they say, "to keep their eyes from being opened." The separation of the sexes for work and play begins from about age seven to ten and is strictly enforced at puberty. Coeducation in the school violated this basic attitude and was bitterly opposed by parents. Girls are unprepared for menstruation, which comes as a shock to most of them; girls will rarely confide in their mothers about menstruation or other intimate subjects.

In most inter-personal situations, Tepoztecans do not express affection in a demonstrative fashion and generally avoid bodily contact. Perhaps the major exception to this occurs in the mother-child relationship during the nursing period, when the child is held, fondled, and sometimes kissed. In courtship there is an increasing amount of demonstrativeness and physical contact, but kissing is still not customary.

Tepoztecans learned the Spanish custom of kissing the hand of the priest and of parents and godparents, but it never came easily to them and is now disappearing. The shaking of hands in greeting and departure and the typical Mexican double embrace are not generally practised in Tepoztlán and occur only among politicians and some of the more citified families. When Tepoztecans are drunk, this restraint is frequently relaxed, and male companions will walk arm in arm, and men may hug and even kiss their children and wives in the privacy of their homes.

It must be apparent from the preceding pages that Tepoztecans are not, on the whole, a very affectionate people and that means of expressing affection are limited. Normally, the Tepoztecan shows his affection for his children by hard work, good habits, and by providing them with the necessities of life; the child expresses his affection for his parents by obedience, respect, and diligence. Other inter-personal relations reveal good will or affection in so far as they fulfill the required reciprocal behavior. If these formal or practical qualities exist between people, Tepoztecans consider that they have a satisfactory relation with each other, and little else is demanded.

Between parents and children there is now a noticeable tendency, particularly among the younger generation, to express affection and to seek it in terms of greater demonstration of personal interest in each other, in their wants and needs and general welfare over and above life's bare necessities. This interest may be expressed by greater giving of food, clothing, toys, sweets, gifts, and now, by a willingness to make sacrifices for an education. Tepoztecans, particularly men,

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

584
[539]

There are enough flowers in my heart
To make a bouquet for you.
I shall be happy and you will have no trouble
When you enjoy my love.

Novios continue to write letters to one another because of the difficulty of getting together. There is, of course, much secrecy involved in the sending of letters. Many *novios* have a secret place to leave letters, or they may be delivered [202] by a trusted friend or by a child hired for the purpose. Sometimes *novios* deliver [589] letters to one another in passing. Some widows and girls are known to hire themselves for the purpose of delivering messages for lovers, to patch up quarrels, or

[291]
[576]

Fig. 60. A boy waiting hopefully at the plaza for a glimpse of his *novia*.

[202] to convince a girl to become someone's *novia*. These women are known as [589] *alcahuetes*. Another term for them is *corre-ve-y-dile* (run-see-and-tell). Both of [195] these are insulting terms, and such go-betweens are strongly disapproved of; they are also suspected of knowing sorcery especially appropriate for *novios*.

Meetings between *novios* may take place at the fountain (Fig. 61), in the corral of the girl's house after dark, or in a deserted spot in the daytime, always with much apprehension about being discovered. If they are *novios* for the first time, acquaintanceship generally develops slowly. *Novios* generally caress and embrace [832] but rarely kiss. Kissing is a modern innovation in courtship, and only the more sophisticated *novios* do so. Kissing is traditionally associated with religious worship,

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

584
312

Fig. 61. Courtship at the fountain.

584
kissing the saints and kissing the priest's hands. One girl, when asked whether she [832]
ever kissed her *novio*, said, "What, is he a saint that I should kiss him?" Sexual [836]
relations between *novios* occurs frequently but not, as believed by parents, inevitably. Among young people who are *novios* for the first time, sexual relations may not occur until after one or even two years, or the pair may eventually separate over the question. Among more mature *novios*, platonic relations are a rarity. Ideally, both the boy and the girl are expected to be virgins at marriage, but it is safe to say that most boys and some girls have sexual relations before marriage.

Young boys and girls often seek out older companions to learn from them the art of courtship. Girls at school and in the Juventud Católica discuss their *novios*, [522]
read each others' love letters, tell of experiences, and even tell off-color jokes and stories. Boys entering their teens loiter among older boys at every opportunity. The following excerpt from the story of one of our informants (now age forty) is a typical experience:

> When I was about fourteen, I managed to join up with some boys of eighteen and twenty. They began to say, "How many *novias* have you?" I answered, "None." "How stupid! Haven't you noticed the girl nearby who likes you?" They began to teach me how to speak to *novias*.
>
> Once a girl of about seventeen who lived near my house said to me, "I see you go out a

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948)1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

584 lot." I answered, "No." "Well," she said, "if I were a man I would have three *novias* at a time." "But I can't support a woman," I answered. "Well, let her support you," she said. I consulted my friends and told them of the conversation. They urged me on. Once I got up enough courage to tell the girl I loved her. I already had sexual desires, but I didn't know how to act or talk. I don't recall the year, but it was in 1915 or 1916 when one day in June I told her I liked her. On the day before the barrio fiesta, on August 5, she said to me, "Where have you been that I haven't seen you?" I asked to meet her and said I wanted to talk to her. She agreed to meet me that night. I threw little stones in the darkness to tell her I could come out. She told me to meet her behind the house. The night was pitch black, and there was a little drizzle. I began to make little noises to tell her where I was. I moved the little twigs. When she arrived I got the chills. She stopped about three feet in front of me and said, "Well, here I am, what did you want to talk about?" I didn't know what to say so I said, "Do you or don't you want to marry me?" "But I am older than you, perhaps your folks won't want you to." We were about two feet apart. "Come closer," I said, and I grabbed her and drew her under my serape. And then I got more chills. "What's the matter with you?" she said. "Do you have malaria?" Finally, I said, "Let us lie down here." She said no, and I said yes. It was yes, no, yes, no, until finally at about 3:00 A.M. we heard the *chirimía,* and since her father was to get up soon, she left and nothing happened. The next day, I saw her and she laughed at me. I told my friends what happened. They called me a fool and said, "Why did you just talk and talk instead of grab her and throw her down?" I never got beyond the *novio* stage. I never really got her. She had a serious lover who wanted to marry her. Once he asked me not to continue talking to her, and he threatened me. He was twenty, and I was fifteen, and I was very thin. Soon after that I bought a knife and always carried it with me for protection.

Being *novios* does not always mean that a boy and girl will marry. In the past, when a girl accepted a *novio* she usually expected him to become her husband. Today it is common to have several *novios* before marriage, and some girls and boys have several *novios* simultaneously, a practice which is considered dishonorable. A girl who has many *novios* is called *loca,* and a boy who has many *novias* is called *muy enamorado.* Boys often court girls for the purpose of having sexual relations and then abandon them.

[195] [836]

832 584 Many young men resort to love magic when they have difficulty in courting a girl. The most common procedure is to use a powder made of crushed human skull bones. This powder is to be placed in the girl's right hand, in her hair, or in a sweet drink. Once this is done, it is believed the girl will begin to love the boy and miss him. Some men in Tepoztlán, and in other parts of Mexico, believe that the leg of a beetle placed in a girl's soda drink will get her very *loca* and make her desire sexual relations. Care is taken not to use too large a dose. The following story was told to illustrate what can happen when an overdose is given.

A youth of twenty-four liked a girl very much and decided to "corner" her and speak to her, but she insulted him. This happened three times. He still wanted her. A friend advised him to get some magical skull powder and put it into a drink for her. He did this but gave her too large a dose. Then the girl began to feel so much desire for him that

2:Lewis E-5 (1943-1948) 1951 NU37 Tepoztlan NU37

she went to his house alone. The boy's parents refused to let her stay, and she became *loca* and a street woman. The authorities jailed her. Later a man took pity on her, married her, and "cured" her. 584 [832]

The use of sorcery for revenge is very much feared by those who have jilted or humiliated a *novio*. Young women are believed to take the picture of the former lover and stick pins in the head or breast or other part of his body, depending upon where she wishes to harm him. Often chronic illnesses in young men are attributed to some girl's black magic. [754] [753]

MARRIAGE

The traditional and most respectable form of arranging a marriage is the *petición de mano*, or asking for the hand of the girl.[8] This is done by the boy's father and his godfather of baptism. If the boy's father is dead, the mother may act as substitute; if the boy is an orphan, his godfather may go alone or with one of the boy's relatives, preferably the uncle. Formerly the parents chose a wife for their son and generally asked for his approval. Nowadays the procedure is reversed, with the boy indicating the desired girl to his father, and asking him to make the formal request for her hand. Most often the boy and girl are *novios* secretly before they inform their parents of a desire to marry. If so, the girl may ascertain her parents' attitude toward the marriage before a formal request is made. Sometimes the boy may first write a formal proposal of marriage to the girl's parents and only after getting a favorable reply will he ask his father to begin negotiations. When the boy's father and godfather appear at the girl's home, her parents, even though they plan to accept the offer, ask for a stay of a few weeks (*pedir un plazo*), as a matter of form, and the men are asked to return at the end of that time. [608]

In cases where the boy and girl are not *novios* and where the matter was not prearranged, there is the humiliating possibility of the marriage request being refused. But, to avoid offending, direct refusals are rarely made. Various excuses may be given, and a long stay may be requested to consider the matter. A request for a stay of one year is generally taken to mean a negative reply, and few

[8] The only account of marriage customs which I have been able to locate in the historical documents dealing with Tepoztlán is found in the *Relación*, pp. 241-42, and is presumably a description of pre-Hispanic customs, as told to the Spanish officials by the natives. This account, though sketchy, suggests the existence of class differences in marriage customs and suggests patrilocal residence. It also reveals an example of the underlying similarity between native symbolism and Catholic ritual in parts of the marriage ceremony. The pertinent excerpt is as follows: ". . . and thus when a nobleman married he sent for the woman who was carried on a litter decorated with arches of flowers at midday, if she were from the upper class; but in the case of the daughter of a commoner, she was carried on the back [of someone] and they carried before her a burning torch of pine, one for her and one for her betrothed, and upon arriving at the house of the betrothed they took her into a small room, where there was a stone of the kind upon which they place the *ollas* [for heating] and they commanded her to give them something as a sign that she was mistress of the house, and this done they allowed them to be there for four days, without one going to the other, and finally they took them out and washed them and dressed them and made a knot with the stuff of his garment and her *huipil*, and when this knot was made the marriage was completed. . . ."